

Strategic Choices

The 1999 Executive Proposed Budget supports critical regional and local services required by the citizens of King County. It maintains the high quality of services provided by King County and promotes several initiatives to respond to priorities identified by the public. Those priorities are described in the sections which follow.

Growing Demands for Criminal Justice Services

Growing demands for criminal justice services continue to challenge King County government. New laws require enforcement, prosecution, and public defense resources. Increased sanctions for criminal behavior place additional demands on courts, jails and rehabilitation programs. King County will continue to focus on protecting public safety, while pursuing long-range planning to ensure criminal justice services are not only efficient, but also effective in reducing criminal behavior in our communities. The 1999 Executive Proposed Budget includes the additional resources necessary to respond to the increased demands on the criminal justice system and to implement innovative ways of doing business.

The Department of Adult Detention is faced with managing a rising jail population. 1998 was intended as a transition from operating a crowded facility to a system with sufficient bed capacity. Instead, the 1999 projected Average Daily Population of 3,013 (which is an increase of 467 from 1998 Adopted levels) assumes another year of growth and has created the need to place special emphasis on population management. As a result of the high population levels, the Department will have to suspend the contract with the Federal Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) for most of 1999 as all fourteen units at the Regional Justice Center will be needed to accommodate the local population. In 1999, the last of the remaining units (14th) will be opened and one unit will be double-celled for half the year, which will require additional funding. Additionally, overtime funds will be needed to address increasing workload requirements.

While the inmate population and the associated resources required to manage them continue to increase, the revenue from contracts is projected to decline by \$2.1 million. Revenue from the City of Seattle is projected to decrease by almost \$2 million, reflecting an inmate population changing from a billable misdemeanor population to a growing nonbillable felon population. This decrease is partially offset by an increase in suburban city revenues of nearly \$882,000. Overall, contract revenue from cities is projected to decline by about \$1 million in 1999 from the 1998 Adopted level. As noted, the contract with Immigration Naturalization Services (INS) will be suspended in the latter part of the year because of the need for additional capacity for local needs. The suspension of this contract will result in a further reduction of \$1 million in revenues from 1998 levels.

Placing an additional strain on the Current Expense (CX) Fund is the end of the one-time Criminal Justice (CJ) Fund revenues, which had been reserved to help support the increased operating costs due to the opening of the Regional Justice Center (RJC). As a result, the CX Fund will pick up \$4.8 million of DAD expenses previously supported by the CJ Fund.

New Ways of Doing Business in the Criminal Justice System

The Department of Adult Detention will play a major role in the Executive's efforts to forestall the construction of a second Regional Justice Center (RJC). The dramatic increases in demand for justice services, particularly those associated with detaining offenders, led the County Executive

to form a Swift and Certain Justice Team. This group, a cooperative venture by the Executive, King County detention facilities and courts, law enforcement, Seattle and suburban cities, will lay out a blueprint for more efficient use of criminal justice resources in the short- and long-term.

The Department of Community and Human Service's Mental Health Division and Office of Public Defense, King County District Court, the Prosecuting Attorney's Office, and the Department of Adult Detention are collaboratively working to establish a Mental Health Court. The goal of the Court is to help mentally ill defendants stop cycling through the criminal justice system by linking them to mental health services. This initiative is an example of the Executive's commitment to more effectively manage criminal justice resources. This Court will provide mentally ill individuals, who are charged with a State misdemeanor offense in King County District Court, a single point of contact with a specialized team of Court personnel and treatment specialists to receive court-ordered treatment as a diversion from prosecution or jail.

King County acknowledges that most mentally ill misdemeanants enter the criminal justice system because of their disease. Furthermore, the County asserts that incarceration is not the most effective means for reducing recidivism for most of the mentally ill offenders, as jail does little to treat the mental illness. By offering misdemeanor mentally ill offenders closely monitored treatment, King County expects Mental Health Court to reduce recidivism among this population. The Court will also provide more efficient case processing for defendants with mental illness.

The District Court 1999 Proposed Budget includes funding to support a pilot project to help King County more effectively manage its criminal justice resources through implementing recommendations from the Misdemeanant Study. This 1998 study found that defendants who fail to appear for court are twice as likely to go to jail as are defendants who do appear. District Court will be participating in a multi-jurisdictional effort to pilot and test a variety of recommendations designed to reduce failure to appear incidents.

The Department of Judicial Administration is continuing the development and implementation of its Electronic Court Records (ECR) system. This system is allowing Judicial Administration to move toward technological "connectivity" to accommodate legal record keeping, court scheduling, and filing fee and fine revenue accounting demands. Once the system is fully operational, attorneys will be able to file court papers electronically from remote locations; Judicial Administration will require less space to store court records; and the clientele will be able to access Court files in a more timely fashion. Since the beginning of the ECR project, efficiencies have already been realized, resulting in the reduction of one case processing position in 1999.

The Sheriff's Office plans to serve King County communities more efficiently, effectively and creatively in 1999. The Sheriff's Office will begin implementing the Community-Oriented Policing and Problem Solving (COPPS) service-delivery model in 1999. The overall philosophy of COPPS is to improve the ability of the Sheriff's Office to prevent and solve crimes in our communities by working with community partners, by using crime data and analyses, by applying good problem-solving techniques, and by proactively developing crime prevention solutions.

The 1999 Proposed Budget for the Sheriff's Office includes proposals in support of COPPS including the establishment of a centralized crime analysis function which will enable the department to solve more crimes, thus reducing the fear associated with crime; respond to citizen

requests for closer interaction with law enforcement; deploy available resources more efficiently; and use alternatives to handling calls for service

Additionally, the Sheriff's Office will establish a Youth Support and Enforcement Unit. Working in concert with the King County Prosecutor's Office, state Department of Social and Health Services, and community service groups, this unit will increase the level of support provided by non-custodial parents to young people. The formation of a Youth Support and Enforcement Unit will also allow the consolidation of policing strategies aimed at the prevention of youth crime and the proactive support of positive youth activities.

Health and Human Services Challenges

The 1999 Executive Proposed Budget for Health & Human Services reflects both the challenges and opportunities confronting the County in 1999. Programs primarily funded by Current Expense dollars are directly affected by slower growth in revenues and rising criminal justice costs. On the other hand, 1999 represents an opportunity for programs that receive money from other funding sources to refine and expand their programs to better meet the needs of King County's most vulnerable residents.

The Department of Community & Human Services (DCHS), more than any other department, struggled to maintain service levels in the face of the limited availability of Current Expense funding. Every attempt was made to include cuts that do not lead to reductions in service. In this vein, the Community Services Division (CSD) eliminated all one-time expenditures from 1998. However, some reductions in service were unavoidable. Reductions are made to CSD contracts that do not provide regional services, as defined by the Regional Finance & Governance process, and that do not fit in the Division's core mission. Additionally, the 1999 Executive Proposed Budget significantly reduces funding for new Children and Family Commission demonstration projects.

New Ways of Doing Business in Public Health

Faced with a growing number of uninsured patients, increased service demands, and rising labor and technology costs, the Department of Public Health has shifted resources to programs that emphasize the Department's strengths and maximize both quality of care and the number of clients served. The 1999 Executive Proposed Budget contains several initiatives to help accomplish these goals. One major initiative involves an enhanced partnership between DPH and community health care clinics in South King County. DPH will offer immunizations, Medicaid application support, public health nursing, WIC, and interpretation services while the community clinics provides direct primary care services.

In East King County, DPH will consolidate the pediatric and family health programs to help address the increase in uninsured clients. DPH has also budgeted additional resources to subsidize uncompensated care in communities where alternative providers are not available. The Department will control uncompensated care costs by managing the ratio of paying to non-paying clients.

Creating a Continuum of Care

A major initiative in the 1999 Executive Proposed Budget is the merger of the Mental Health Division within DCHS and the Division of Alcohol & Substance Abuse Services within the Department of Public Health into one division – the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Division. This new division will be part of DCHS. The new division will be poised to provide an

integrated continuum of mental health and/or substance abuse services, thus promoting stability and recovery regardless of whether an individual is experiencing a short-term crisis or a chronic condition that requires ongoing and intensive services. Clients will benefit from comprehensive and integrated services that focus on individual problem identification and full-spectrum treatment.

Programs to Serve the Needs of People with Chronic Substance Abuse Problems

The 1999 Executive Proposed Budget features a number of initiatives that target people with chronic substance abuse problems. Resources are provided to the Dutch Shisler Sobering Center, where chronic public inebriates have a place where to sleep off the effects of acute intoxication in a safe, secure, custodial environment. The facility will also provide case management services to assist clients in securing housing, treatment, medical care, and other social and health services. The Proposed Budget also adds resources to the Crisis Triage Center, a facility at Harborview Medical Center that offers people experiencing mental health or substance abuse crisis immediate short-term treatment and linkages to long-term care. Lastly, the Proposed Budget devotes resources to developing housing alternatives for the chronic substance abusing population.

Financial Partner Needed

Both the Mental Health Court and the Chronic Public Inebriate (CPI) initiatives make extensive use of fund balance from the Mental Health Fund and the Alcohol Fund to support program costs. These resources are supplemented by small amounts of Current Expense dollars. Traditionally, treatment costs have been financial responsibility of the State. But, because the County believes strongly that Mental Health Court and the CPI initiatives have significant potential to improve the health and well being of both individuals and the community, it supports these programs in 1999 with existing County resources with the realization that County funds cannot sustain the programs over the long-term. The County maintains the view that the State bears the financial responsibility for these essential treatment programs. Therefore, in the coming year, the County will be working to bring the State on as a financial partner in these important efforts.

Housing Programs

King County continues its commitment to provide affordable housing. The 1999 Proposed Budget provides additional funds to the Housing Opportunity Fund, used to develop and preserve affordable housing for low income residents. It also adds funds to ascertain the number of homeless veterans in King County, to develop additional housing for people with developmental disabilities, and to develop housing options for people with chronic substance abuse problems.

Endangered Species Act

On February 26, 1998, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) proposed listing the Puget Sound Chinook salmon for protection under the Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA), along with more than a dozen other salmon and steelhead species in Washington, Oregon and California. A final NMFS decision on the nature of the listing of these salmonoid populations will be made in early 1999.

King County is responding to this proposed listing by taking a leadership role in coordinating a regional response from King, Snohomish and Pierce Counties. King County agencies have developed a workplan that addresses the policy, legal, technical, and community based foundation for long-term salmon recovery, while also including implementation programs for immediate response for a healthier salmon environment. Activities and tasks have been organized under four

program tracks: 1) Program Planning, Coordination and Project Management, 2) Public Outreach, 3) Technical Program, and 4) Implementation. Responding to the proposed Federal listing of the Chinook salmon as threatened will result in expenditures of approximately \$6.3 million.

Financial Stability for the Department of Development and Environmental Services

The Department of Development and Environmental Services (DDES) is proposing to undergo a fee restructuring in 1999. Current fees, set years ago, do not reflect the costs of services. Many fees do not recover costs, while many others exceed the cost of production. The mix of products is unpredictable from one year to the next. The mix of products and its unpredictability has resulted in unstable financial performance and a fund that is in a deficit position. This fee restructuring proposal will revamp the current system so that all fees will recover costs of services performed, putting the fund on the road to financial health.

The Department has a lengthy history of financial instability. In 1991, Arthur Anderson released a report recommending that DDES should analyze its fees and financial plan. In 1993, DDES released the first in a series of studies of its fee structure. The studies concluded that a leading cause of the department's financial instability was due to the fee structure. The current state of the DES Fund exacerbates this situation. When the Fund was created in 1983, it was underfunded and on a cash basis. There was no cost accounting of what the fees should have been. As a result, the Department had a deficit in the late 1980s and participated in heavy borrowing in 1990 through 1992. Although the Department has risen from a fund deficit of \$20 million to the current \$2.5 million, progress has ceased in retiring the deficit. This fee restructuring proposal will increase the Department's fiscal responsibility and stability.

Roads Flexible Response Budgeting

The Roads Services Division will continue to implement its Flexible Response Budgeting. This new method of budgeting allows Roads to reallocate funding to high priority projects ready for implementation. Examples of these accelerated projects include widening and improving 228th Ave. SE/NE on the Sammamish Plateau for approximately \$17 million; widening and improving Avondale Road, including adding a crosswalk signal at Cottage Lake Elementary School, for \$2.6 million; replacing Novelty Bridge for \$8.8 million; and preparing environmental studies for construction of a new road linking the Sammamish Plateau Access Road (South Link) to the Issaquah-Fall City Road, at \$3.8 million.